

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Thank you, Mr. President. I rise today, along with my colleagues, in support of S. 4, the Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act. Our military has the finest hardware and equipment in the world, but, as any general or admiral will tell you, the real source of America's strength is America's fighting men and women. We spend billions of dollars to train and equip our troops. I believe the investment has paid off, but we have neglected one very important aspect of this equation. As we now have an all-volunteer force, our training and weapons will be wasted if we cannot keep quality personnel in our Armed Forces.

Everyone has seen, I think, the recent press accounts about the personnel shortfalls, particularly in the Navy and Air Force. The discussion in the Washington Post about the status of the U.S.S. *Harry Truman*, our newest aircraft carrier, provided dramatic evidence of how deep this crisis has grown in our inability to man this vessel.

Fortunately, the Senate is able to act now to begin to reverse this trend. S. 4 provides us with a very significant across-the-board minimum pay increase of 4.8 percent. In addition, there will be other increases staggered on top of this targeted to specific areas of the military.

As Secretary Cohen has stated, I do not believe we can pay our troops too much, but I do believe we can pay them too little. That is the state we find ourselves in today. In a booming economy, Mr. President, with low unemployment, our well-trained soldiers and sailors can walk off a base and often double their salary for less work. It has made retention very difficult, and we are taking a great stride in alleviating the situation with S. 4.

The value of this bill is not just in the actual pay increase, it is also an important gesture that tells our fighting men and women that their Government cares about their well-being and appreciates the very difficult task that we ask them to perform and we are hearing them loudly and clearly.

We will keep in mind that pay increases alone, however, cannot solve this problem, as many of my colleagues have said earlier this morning. The military will never be competitive with the private sector on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

My friend, Senator CLELAND from Georgia, made a similar remark in committee the other day that stuck with me. I think he was quoting someone else, but he said the armed services may recruit a soldier, but we retain a family. And that is so true.

When we talk about keeping our troops in the service, we have to remember that the quality-of-life issues

for the family is really the core issue—soldiers wanting to be good spouses, soldiers wanting to be good parents, soldiers wanting to have a good quality of life for their family.

So while pay is certainly part of the equation, it also extends to housing, medical care, education benefits for spouses and children, day care, operations tempo, and a myriad of other issues that make up a family's quality of life. There is still much to do. This bill is only a beginning, but it is a good step.

One of the important steps taken in this bill—and it is quite innovative and I thank, again, the Senator from Georgia for bringing this up in committee—is that we will allow military personnel to transfer their Montgomery GI bill benefits to their spouses or dependents. For midcareer, officer or enlisted person, the knowledge that their children will have access to a quality education by enabling them to use their benefits is a smart incentive and one that is cost effective for us. It is an example of how we can tailor our benefits in a way that meets the needs of precisely the kind of people we want to retain.

I also believe it is very important for us to remember the contribution of our Guard and Reserve forces in these discussions. For this reason, I have a series of amendments that address some of the inequity between the benefits programs for our regulars and the Guard and the Reserve units.

With a leaner military, Mr. President, we cannot perform the complex missions of our military without a strong Guard and strong Reserve component. We must always keep our eyes on this reality when addressing retention issues.

I am proud of the statement that the Senate is making with this legislation. I commend our chairman and our ranking member for bringing this bill to the floor this early in this Congress. I hope that this will not be the end of our work, but rather a strong beginning, a bipartisan beginning. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the committee to make the real difference in the quality of life for America's military personnel.

I thank you, Mr. President.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:08 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:16 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. INHOFE).

SOLDIERS', SAILORS', AIRMEN'S AND MARINES' BILL OF RIGHTS ACT OF 1999

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 9

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 9 offered by the Senator from Idaho. The yeas and nays have not been ordered.

Mr. WARNER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank the Chair.

The order provides that at 2:30 we will proceed to a vote. But it also provided for the opportunity for anyone to express, through an objection, such concerns as they may have. I suggest perhaps just a minute or two here before we commence. And I say to the Chair, it is our expectation this vote will go forward, but I do want to protect the rights, for 1 minute, of those who might wish to come forward.

I am informed that the Democratic caucus is still in progress; is that it? I think it has broken up now. We are ready on this side. Mr. President, I am informed that we are ready to go.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair thanks the Senator.

Mr. WARNER. I just wanted to protect the rights of others.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 9 offered by the Senator from Idaho.

Mr. WARNER. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question occurs on agreeing to amendment No. 9. The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. GORTON (when his name was called). Present.

Mr. NICKLES. I announce that the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 87, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 20 Leg.]

YEAS—87

Abraham	Cleland	Hagel
Akaka	Cochran	Harkin
Allard	Collins	Hatch
Ashcroft	Conrad	Helms
Baucus	Coverdell	Hollings
Bayh	Craig	Hutchinson
Bennett	Crapo	Hutchison
Biden	Daschle	Inhofe
Bingaman	DeWine	Inouye
Bond	Domenici	Jeffords
Boxer	Dorgan	Johnson
Breaux	Durbin	Kennedy
Brownback	Edwards	Kerrey
Bryan	Enzi	Kerry
Bunning	Feinstein	Kohl
Burns	Fitzgerald	Landrieu
Byrd	Frist	Lautenberg
Campbell	Graham	Leahy
Chafee	Gramm	Levin

Lieberman	Reid	Snowe
Lincoln	Robb	Specter
Lott	Roberts	Thomas
Lugar	Rockefeller	Thurmond
Mack	Roth	Torricelli
McConnell	Santorum	Voinovich
Mikulski	Sarbanes	Warner
Moynihan	Schumer	Wellstone
Murkowski	Smith Bob (NH)	Wyden
Murray	Smith Gordon H	
Reed	(OR)	

NAYS—11

Dodd	Gregg	Sessions
Feingold	Kyl	Stevens
Grams	McCain	Thompson
Grassley	Nickles	

ANSWERED "PRESENT"—1

Gorton

NOT VOTING—1

Shelby

The amendment (No. 9) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I want to alert our colleagues to a fact which was not clear the last time we spoke on the subject of this amendment which we just adopted. There was not certainty as to whether that amendment would have been subject to a point of order had a point of order been made. We protected that possibility in our unanimous consent agreement in the event the Parliamentarian ruled that it would have been subject to a point of order.

In fact, we now understand that it would have been subject to a point of order, and therefore we have now another provision in the bill that is in violation of the Budget Act because it is not paid for. That is something which we should really be very conscious of as we go along here and very concerned about.

But we did protect our colleagues in the event that that was the ruling, and none of our colleagues decided to raise the point of order. But in fact it could have been raised. And we should take very serious note of any of the violations of the Budget Act as we proceed, because at some point we are going to have to pay for the amendments we add as well as the bill itself.

I thank the Chair.

Mr. ALLARD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote by which the amendment was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 11

(Purpose: To make a limitation on tuition assistance for members of the Armed Forces inapplicable to members deployed in support of a contingency operation or similar operation)

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise to offer an amendment to S. 4. The amendment has already been sent to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI) proposes an amendment numbered 11.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end of title I, add the following:

SEC. 104. INCREASED TUITION ASSISTANCE FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES DEPLOYED IN SUPPORT OF A CONTINGENCY OPERATION OR SIMILAR OPERATION.

(a) INAPPLICABILITY OF LIMITATION ON AMOUNT.—Section 2007(a) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking "and" at the end of paragraph (2);

(2) by striking the period at the end of paragraph (3) and inserting "; and"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

"(4) in the case of a member deployed outside the United States in support of a contingency operation or similar operation, all of the charges may be paid while the member is so deployed."

(b) INCREASED AUTHORITY SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATIONS.—The authority to pay additional tuition assistance under paragraph (4) of section 2007(a) of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), may be exercised only to the extent provided for in appropriations Acts.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I offer an amendment to S. 4, the Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999.

The need for this bill is obvious. The Army, Navy, and Air Force are all experiencing recruitment and retention problems that threaten to further degrade our already overstressed military. By every measure, quality of life issues are the center of the problem. Fortunately, our military personnel don't join to get rich. In this all too material age, it is refreshing to note that their motivations to remain in uniform do not include financial gain.

Nonetheless, it is a fact that our current military is not the military of our fathers. It currently includes the highest percentage of families in its history. The pay, the retirement, and the medical benefits are issues that must be addressed. This bill seeks to do that.

Educational opportunities are also important to our service people, especially those who perhaps are not career oriented. We cannot lose sight of the fact that what we do here today will benefit not just our military personnel by increasing knowledge, eliminating boredom, and stimulating the mind, but are all things that improve the capability of our young men and women in our armed services.

Our society at large will benefit especially with regard to educational opportunities. Today's corporal studying in his off-duty hours for his bachelor's degree might well be tomorrow's small business employer. Nevertheless, his extra effort will improve his job per-

formance immediately. The Department of Defense has long offered excellent opportunities for active duty personnel to better themselves through education. The administrators of these programs are enthusiastic and devoted to the uniformed people they serve. There is one thing we can do, however, to fine tune the regulations they must follow, and my amendment is designed to do just that.

Currently, secretaries of each branch of the service are authorized to pay up to 75 percent of college tuition and related instructional costs for most personnel pursuing additional education in their off duty hours. However, for Navy personnel deployed aboard ship, the Secretary of the Navy is authorized to pay the full 100 percent of such costs by virtue of their PACE program. PACE is an acronym for "Program for Afloat College Education." Therefore, a soldier on deployment in Bosnia may only be receiving reimbursement for 75 percent of his tuition costs, while just offshore, a sailor deployed aboard ship is receiving 100 percent.

My amendment would authorize all service secretaries to pay up to 100 percent of tuition costs for personnel deployed on a contingency basis. It does not require that a specific percentage be paid. It simply gives a service secretary that option. And because the exercising of that option is contingent on the availability of funding, no additional appropriation is required.

This amendment will equalize the playing field between the services as well as make the difficult deployments to such places as Bosnia and Saudi Arabia a bit more beneficial to those service people who wish to take advantage of the opportunity. It is supported by the Defense Department and is indisputable in the interests of our young men and women in uniform. I ask my colleagues for their support of this amendment.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, my colleague from the State of Wyoming has done a great job on the amendment. It is discretionary and begins to put on par the Army and Air Force with the Navy program. We think it is the right solution and the right direction for this. So we are not going to object to the ENZI amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Do other Senators wish to be heard?

The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I commend the Senator from Wyoming for his amendment. It is a very good amendment. It equalizes the Army and the Air Force with what already exists for the Navy and the Marines. The reason we should equalize it is because when our Army and Air Force personnel are deployed, they are effectively in the same situation and need this tuition assistance to the same extent that the Navy and the Marines already have it authorized. As Senator

ALLARD said, it is discretionary with our service secretaries. That means that it hopefully will be accomplished and hopefully can be done within their budgets but does not raise a Budget Act problem.

I commend our friend from Wyoming, and we support the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment of the Senator from Wyoming.

The amendment (No. 11) was agreed to.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote by which the amendment was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. ROBB addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, will the Senator from Virginia yield for a unanimous consent request?

Mr. ROBB. The Senator from Virginia is delighted to yield to the ranking member for a unanimous consent request.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Matthew Varzally and John Bradshaw of Senator WELLSTONE's staff have floor privileges during consideration of S. 4.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. ROBB. Thank you, Mr. President.

AMENDMENT NO. 8

(Purpose: To increase the amount of certain bonuses and special pay and to authorize payment of certain additional special pay and bonuses)

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 8 previously filed at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Virginia (Mr. ROBB), for himself, Mr. CLELAND, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. BINGAMAN proposes an amendment numbered 8.

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The text of the amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Amendments Submitted.")

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I rise to offer the special incentive pay amendment to S. 4.

I am pleased to be joined in offering this legislation by our colleague from Massachusetts, Senator KENNEDY, Senator CLELAND from Georgia, Senator KERREY from Nebraska, and Senator BINGAMAN from New Mexico.

Yesterday, Mr. President, a number of our colleagues, among them Senator ALLARD, described the acute challenges

that are faced by the Navy as it struggles to retain sufficient numbers of critical personnel like Navy SEALs, surface warfare officers, nuclear-qualified officers, and career enlisted fliers.

While S. 4, with its significant pay raises, improved retirement and enhanced GI bill benefits is an important step in the right direction, we still have big problems in these smaller categories of military service where we have been only marginally successful in our retention efforts.

This amendment begins to address the downward retention trends the Navy is experiencing in these areas by aligning pay increases with problem specialties.

S. 4's compensation approach begins to address the services' broad recruiting and retention concerns, but it won't assure that the undermanned, highly skilled warfare specialists that Senator ALLARD described so eloquently yesterday will get well any time soon.

Special incentive pay and bonuses have been the shaping tools of choice to fill the breach. The experience of the military services is that historically targeted kinds of bonuses have proven highly effective and very cost efficient in attacking retention problem areas within specific communities.

This year, the Navy and Air Force would like to make even greater use of this proven strategy. They have fully funded in their budgets, and have asked us to support, establishing two new bonuses and expanding authority for four others.

This amendment to S. 4 provides these targeted fixes. Specifically, it addresses enlisted recruiting and retention shortfalls by increasing the maximum authorization of the enlistment bonus, or EB as it is referred to, and selective reenlistment bonus, or SRB. And it addresses the critical shortfalls in the unrestricted line communities by providing two new continuation bonuses, one for surface warfare officers, and another for special warfare officers.

Finally, several existing bonuses are increased, including those for divers, nuclear-qualified officers, linguists, and other critical specialties. These pay increases will target specific job skills at experience levels to cost-effectively attract, retain, and distribute highly trained personnel at critical points in their career.

The Nation simply cannot afford to continue to pay as much as we do to recruit and train these talented individuals only to see them leave the service out of frustration over the inadequacies of their pay and benefits and the promise of better compensation in the private sector.

Mr. President, as I stated yesterday, the special incentive pay amendment to S. 4 is exactly the kind of targeted fix Congress can and should support. I

hope our colleagues will join us in sending a signal to our men and women in uniform that we have listened to them and that we understand their needs.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor and ask for its adoption.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I support this amendment. We are all concerned about reports of declining retention in our Armed Forces. Our midgrade officers and enlisted personnel are leaving the service at alarming rates. This amendment directly addresses this critical problem by focusing special and incentive pays on areas where the Armed Forces face the greatest retention challenges.

The readiness of our Armed Forces must be a top priority. Our service men and women are an indispensable part of our Nation's defense. We must act to improve retention in order to ensure the readiness of our Armed Forces. In today's tight budget environment, it is imperative that we efficiently use our taxpayers' dollars. Special and incentive pays are an effective way to increase retention while being mindful of costs.

Our amendment responds to the needs of the Armed Services by authorizing programs that the services specifically want and that are ready to be implemented. These programs have been thoroughly researched by the services and will have an immediate impact on retention.

At the Senate Armed Services Readiness Hearing in January, Admiral Jay Johnson, the Chief of Naval Operations, agreed with my assessment that current Navy retention rates will result in the Navy having 50 percent fewer Surface Warfare Officers than needed. Officers in these positions have never been authorized to receive special pay incentives, and retention of these men and women is now among the lowest of any officer community in the Armed Forces. This amendment gives the Navy a flexible means to address this critical retention issue, and will give the same flexibility to the other services in the specific areas where the most attention is needed.

In these critical times for recruiting and retention of military personnel, we must enact sensible legislation that provides the services with effective flexibility in the management of their personnel challenges. No one knows the full effects of retention problems more than the services themselves. We need to give the services the tools they need so they can help ensure the readiness of our Armed Forces. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this amendment and I commend Senator ROBB and Senator CLELAND for their leadership on this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further discussion? If not, the question is on agreeing to amendment No. 8.

The amendment (No. 8) was agreed to.

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. ALLARD. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I rise to add my enthusiastic support for S. 4.

The most important responsibility a nation has is to its people's security, ensuring a nation's freedom. As all of us in life, nations and governments are no different. We must prioritize. We must prioritize our resources. We must prioritize our agendas. We must prioritize the focus that we give to our people.

As important as is Social Security, and Medicare, and tax cuts, and education and all that compose a society that helps develop a culture, national security is the highest priority, the highest priority of a government, and its most important responsibility.

There will be much debate, as there should be much debate, over the next year and a half about the priorities of this Nation as we move into the next century. None will be more important than the debate that is occurring in this Chamber today, because what we are saying, the message we are sending to our people, to our friends and our foes alike around the world, is that, first, we will address the important issues confronting our national security interests; second, we will put into play and into our national security interests the resources necessary to maintain a national security system second to none. We will, in fact, prioritize our national security so that it will, as history has shown, guarantee our foreign policy, our export expansion, our trade reform. All of these are part of an overarching policy that connects, and we cannot have one without the other. We know—we have heard today, we have heard over the last 2 days—the problems that now confront our military—readiness, retention, recruitment.

Any measure we take of our national security today comes up short, comes up wanting, and it is the responsibility of this Congress to lead; it is the responsibility of the President to lead, and it is the responsibility of America to prioritize the national security interests of our country.

We need, more than ever before, the best, the brightest, young men and women to make a military career a career not only they can be proud of, our Nation can be proud of, but a career that serves our interests.

When we look at what has happened to this military in the last 10 years—longer deployments, more deployments, losing our senior enlisted half-way through their 20 years, pilots dropping out, the investment our society puts in these men and women—we find

we are perilously close to the edge as to how far we can continue to defend not only our freedom but our interests in the world. And make no mistake about this, Mr. President. We just don't have select interests in the world; all the world is in our interests. Does that mean we are the international policemen? No. What it does mean is, because we do live in a globally connected world, a very competitive world, that in every corner of the world our interest is peace, stability, freedom; the development of democratic governments and market economies are in the interests of all of our people.

So, this is not esoteric. This is relevant. And as we close the debate on this issue, we are talking about more than just putting the necessary resources into our national security commitments and capabilities, but we are sending a message to our people, to our culture, to our society, that in fact we very much value the men and women who make defending our freedoms their life. What we are saying, as well, to the families of these men and women is: We value you. We know the hardships that you deal with. We know about those long deployments. Not since Vietnam—and I see my colleague, Senator ROBB, standing across the way—not since Senator ROBB and I served in Vietnam has there been any addressing of the pay scale of our military. That is embarrassing. That is not worthy of a great nation and a great people.

So, again, I say this is not only in the best interests of our country, but it is making a very specific and definite statement to our people, to our culture, to our society that duty, honor, and country count. Duty, honor, and country count. We want people to be proud to serve our country in uniform. We want to acknowledge them, not just by increasing their pay and their benefits—because that is, in part, a measurement of their worth and a way to keep score—but by saying: We know your worth. We know how important you are and we value that. We need you.

For those reasons and many more that we have heard today and we will hear tomorrow, I strongly support S. 4.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I want to recognize in a public way the fine statement of my colleague from Nebraska and his hard work on this and many other pieces of legislation coming before the Senate. It is always good to hear from somebody who has personally served in Vietnam and been under fire, so to speak. I want everybody to know it is people like my colleague from Nebraska and their dedication to this country and to freedom which is the reason we think this bill is so important. This is the first major increase in military pay since 1982.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, let me also commend Senator HAGEL for his speech. He inevitably is on the floor when we have a defense authorization bill or an item related closely to it, as this bill is. He is here, fervently urging support of our men and women in our uniformed military. I just want to say that voice is a particularly powerful voice, given Senator HAGEL's background. I again compliment him and thank him for the ongoing commitment. He has not forgotten where he came from, as we sometimes say, and it is very important that we hear such strong voices as Senator HAGEL's.

Mr. HAGEL. I thank my colleague.

AMENDMENT NO. 8

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, while I am on my feet, if I could also thank Senator ROBB for the previous amendment. I was not here. I had to leave for a moment. But it is a very important amendment which we just adopted. We did it in a few moments, but this increased special and incentive pay provision that Senator ROBB has now inserted in this bill is targeted at critical specialties where services are having a significant retention problem. It is very important that we do that.

This provision was in the budget which was submitted to us, but it was not included in this pay bill. It should have been. I think it was a significant oversight that it was not. That oversight has been corrected by Senator ROBB, who is here, as always, watching very, very closely and carefully to make sure that we do the right thing by our troops and by our defense and by our security needs. I thank him for determining that this was left out of a bill which is aimed at supporting our troops, and should not have been. Because of his energy and his perception, it is now back in the bill. I thank him for it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, if I may, I thank the ranking member for his kind words and his leadership on the Armed Services Committee. I join in paying tribute to my fellow Vietnam veteran, Senator HAGEL from Nebraska. It was for all of us who shared that experience a distinct pleasure to have a fellow warrior, comrade in arms, with us who not only understood the causes for which we fought and the trials and tribulations of those who wear the uniform of our country, but was willing to continue to stand up and be counted in those particular instances where it really matters to those we ask ultimately to place themselves in harm's way for our country's benefit.

So I join in the tribute that the Senator from Colorado made and commend him, as well, for the eloquent speech he made yesterday in underscoring the

need to address the critical concerns about retention, particularly in some of the critical MOSSs.

AMENDMENT NO. 15

(Purpose: To amend title 37, United States Code, to improve the aviation career officers special pay)

Mr. ROBB. With that, Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Virginia [Mr. ROBB], for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, and Mr. BINGAMAN, proposes an amendment numbered 15.

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

On page 28, between lines 8 and 9, insert the following:

SEC. 104. AVIATION CAREER OFFICER SPECIAL PAY.

(a) PERIOD OF AUTHORITY.—Subsection (a) of section 301b of title 37, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by inserting “(1)” after “AUTHORIZED.—”;

(2) by striking “during the period beginning on January 1, 1989, and ending on December 31, 1999,” and inserting “during the period described in paragraph (2),”; and

(2) adding at the end the following:

“(2) Paragraph (1) applies with respect to agreements executed during the period beginning on the first day of the first month that begins on or after the date of the enactment of the Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's, and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999 and ending on December 31, 2004.”.

(b) REPEAL OF LIMITATION TO CERTAIN YEARS OF CAREER AVIATION SERVICE.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (5);

(2) by inserting “and” at the end of paragraph (4); and

(4) by redesignating paragraph (6) as paragraph (5).

(c) REPEAL OF LOWER ALTERNATIVE AMOUNT FOR AGREEMENT TO SERVE FOR 3 OR FEWER YEARS.—Subsection (c) of such section is amended by striking “than—” and all that follows and inserting “than \$25,000 for each year covered by the written agreement to remain on active duty.”.

(d) PRORATION AUTHORITY FOR COVERAGE OF INCREASED PERIOD OF ELIGIBILITY.—Subsection (d) of such section is amended by striking “14 years of commissioned service” and inserting “25 years of aviation service”.

(e) TERMINOLOGY.—Such section is further amended—

(1) in subsection (f), by striking “A retention bonus” and inserting “Any amount”; and

(2) in subsection (i)(1), by striking “retention bonuses” in the first sentence and inserting “special pay under this section”.

(f) REPEAL OF CONTENT REQUIREMENTS FOR ANNUAL REPORT.—Subsection (i)(1) of such section is further amended by striking the second sentence.

(g) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Subsection (g)(3) of such section if amended by striking the second sentence.

(h) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section and the amendments made by this section shall take effect on the first day of the first month that

begins on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, this amendment is the aviation career officer special pay amendment to S. 4. I am very pleased to be joined in offering this amendment by the distinguished Senator from Arizona, Senator MCCAIN. He has been a major force in taking care of our military aviators for many years, and I am very pleased to have Senator MCCAIN as a cosponsor as well as the distinguished Senator from New Mexico, Mr. BINGAMAN.

Mr. President, my colleagues on the Senate Armed Services Committee are all very much aware of the serious retention problems now faced by DOD, and especially those pertaining to pilots. The Air Force, for example, is losing three pilots for every two pilots it trains. You don't need to have a math degree to understand the implications of that statistic. To quote Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mike Ryan, this is “one of the most serious pilot force challenges in Air Force history.” And the Navy's situation is no less daunting.

Current law allows aviation officers from O-1s to O-5s with 6 to 13 years of service to receive a bonus of up to \$25,000 a year if the officer agrees to complete 14 years; or up to \$12,000 per year if the officer agrees to complete 1, 2, or 3 additional years.

While existing law was intended to fix retention problems in specific aviation communities such as the F/A-18 community, retention problems are now showing up across the board. This amendment is straightforward. Its intent is to give DOD maximum flexibility to stop the widespread hemorrhaging of pilots. The provision broadens eligibility from anywhere from 1 to 25 years of service and allows for up to \$25,000 for each year of extended duty.

DOD's retention and recruiting problems can grow rapidly. Indeed, many problems that DOD did not even report just a year ago were reported with alarm just 6 months ago. We need to give the Department the flexibility and the headroom to manage a serious and unpredictable problem that cannot be adjusted only once a year by the Congress.

To address concerns that we are ceding too much authority to DOD, this authority must be renewed after 5 years, and the Secretary of Defense will be required to report annually to the defense committees on the impact of this increased authority on the retention of aviators.

This provision is supported by the Department of Defense and is included in the budget request. The flexibility afforded by this provision reflects a consensus of service views developed and will allow each service the ability to tailor compensation programs to meet their specific retention chal-

lenges and to accommodate their unique career path requirements.

During a period of excessive and costly resignations, we simply cannot afford not to give DOD the tools it needs to fix the retention problem. I urge my colleagues to support this provision and help us to address one of our most serious readiness dilemmas.

I yield the floor. I ask for whatever action the managers may wish to take on this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate? The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I compliment my colleague for his hard work on the Armed Services Committee. I do agree with him; the idea of giving discretionary authority to the Secretaries to meet certain retention challenges that come up with qualified pilots is extremely important.

The question I would like to ask my friend from Virginia with regard to his amendment is that I understand that the funds to cover the cost of this amendment are in the fiscal year 2000 defense budget; is that accurate?

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I respond to the distinguished Senator from Colorado by saying that the information provided to this Senator is that it is, in fact, included. There was some concern about one of the services having an objection to this provision at one point. I understand that was cleared up, and it is now in the budget. If there is any information to the contrary, because we haven't actually had the presentation of those details, I will inform the committee before any additional action is taken on this amendment.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, in that case, if this has all been cleared within the budget, then we have no objection to this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

Mr. LEVIN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank the Chair. Mr. President, let me, again, commend our friend from Virginia for his leadership in this area. This is one of our greatest areas of shortfall. It is one of our greatest retention problems. We have to try to do better to retain our pilots, and this amendment will go a long way, indeed, the administration proposal—hopefully it is in their proposal—will go, we believe at least, some way in terms of retaining pilots as its goal. It is a very important goal.

I, again, thank the Senator from Virginia for his leadership in zeroing in on some of the greatest problems that we face in our defense budget, and that is the retention problem of pilots. So we very strongly support this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate? If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment offered by the Senator from Virginia, Mr. ROBB.

The amendment (No. 15) was agreed to.

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote by which the amendment was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I thank my colleague from Michigan.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, the overall goal of this bill is to address the critical recruitment and retention problems facing our military today. I strongly support that objective. We have heard that recruitment numbers are down; that the Navy is 20,000 sailors short of what it needs to meet our national interests at sea; that within the last three months the Army was 2,300 soldiers short of its recruitment goal; and that increasingly pilots are leaving the service to take more lucrative jobs with private airlines. These are serious problems requiring serious attention.

At a time when we are asking our Armed Forces to undertake more different kinds of missions, we need to provide incentives to men and women to serve and to be able to keep those who are currently serving. A 1998 Youth Attitude Tracking Study of 10,000 young men and women found that the desire to serve in our military remains strong. In fact, more than 25% of the men surveyed said they wanted to join one of the active duty services. The percentage of women who expressed interest actually increased by a percentage point from last year, reaching 13% for 1998. Therefore, if the initial desire is there, we should not allow it to be clouded by fears of low pay, frequent deployments and insufficient retirement benefits once they sign up. We must do everything we can to ensure that high quality men and women will continue to join the United States Armed Services maintaining a force that is second to none in the world. The U.S. military maintains its stature because of the people who serve in it.

We cannot afford to lose them or lower the standards of recruitment just to fill in the holes.

Unfortunately, the reality is that we are losing them and we are being forced to look at ways of lowering the bar so that each service can meet its recruitment goal for the coming years. A strong economy able to boast of high paying jobs in the private sector is causing extreme recruitment and retention problems for the Department of Defense. S. 4 attempts to reverse these problems by offering high pay raises, reforming the pay table, establishing a retirement savings plan and expanding Montgomery GI bill benefits for those who serve and will serve in the military. Specifically, it provides for a 4.8% pay raise for every member of the

Armed Services. It changes the pay scale to recognize and reward meritorious service rather than the number of years served. It establishes a thrift savings plan similar to the one available to Federal civil employees and available to many in the private sector by way of 401-K plans. It also provides a monthly subsistence allowance for those service personnel eligible to receive food stamps and expands current Montgomery GI Bill benefits both in the amount of money provided and in the number of people who can use it, among many other things.

When I read through this bill, I find many things that I believe can improve the current system and I support the general thrust of this legislation. I believe that significant pay increases are necessary both to help those currently serving in the military and those who might serve in the future. The Administration did not ignore the call for pay increases coming from many personnel, as well as the Joint Chiefs. They are in the President's budget request. It is clear that military pay must be competitive with wages paid in the private sector.

It truly saddens me that about 12,000 of the brave men and women who have chosen to serve their country by defending the flag, to which we all pledge allegiance, are on food stamps. These people should not be forced to make a decision between serving their country and bringing home enough money to make ends meet. At a time when our economy is growing and higher paying jobs require the kind of skills that are taught in the military, it must be very difficult not to look at the greener pastures.

There is another part of this bill that I want to address because it is one of the reasons why I am going to vote in favor of it. I sincerely believe that the Montgomery GI Bill should be revamped and am pleased that this legislation takes a step in that direction. When this body passed the GI Bill in 1984, the average annual cost of tuition at a four-year university was about \$5,200. That number has since doubled with costs reaching above \$11,000 for the school year 1996 to 1997. However, we are still offering basically the same amount of financial assistance per month and requiring that those eligible to use it first pay \$1200 before they can receive anything back. I wholeheartedly agree that we should do away with that requirement and increase the amount of monthly assistance provided. It is the right thing to do. I also support the provision in this bill that allows immediate family members also to benefit from the education allowances. I am pleased that my friend—and fellow veteran—MAX CLELAND introduced this portion of the bill and that it was incorporated into the final version we are debating today.

I don't believe there is a single one of us who would argue that we shouldn't do more for our Armed Services personnel. That is clear. There is no question that they need increases in their basic pay and an expansion of their education and retirement benefits. But it seems to me that we ought to be careful and at least examine—if not critically analyze—how best to go about addressing our recruitment and retention problems without trying to fast-track a bill which has significant increases in funding, above and beyond what the Administration has requested, without adequately explaining how to pay for it.

I believe that we owe it to our military men and women to determine how we are going to pay for this bill and how funds used for this purpose will affect overall spending and military readiness. What are the sources for funding this bill? Is this coming out of other accounts within the Pentagon's budget? Is it coming out of domestic spending? Is it going to be off-budget? Can we really afford to pay for this across all the pay scales? Are we going to tap into our large budget surplus? It is not clear to me that these critical questions have been answered.

This bill requires funding for 10 years, not just this fiscal year. We don't have any ironclad promises that our economy will prove as strong tomorrow as it is today. I think we ought to be sure that the commitments we make now can be met in the future.

I remain concerned that we are moving this bill in the absence of hearings by the Armed Services Committee and an overall discussion about how our defense dollars should be spent. However, I will support this bill because as a veteran, I understand how important it is to know that your country is behind you and to know that your country recognizes and rewards the service you have given it.

AMENDMENT NO. 9

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, earlier today, the Senate voted on an amendment to S. 4 offered by my colleague Senator CRAPO from Idaho. I voted "present."

The amendment would eliminate a federal law that reduces the military retirement pay of those retirees who continue their public service by working for the federal government as civilians. As a Senator who would personally benefit from the amendment's passage, I am subject to a clear conflict of interest and thus cannot properly vote.

As many of my colleagues know, I am retired Air Force Reserve officer. As such, my retirement pay from the Air Force would increase significantly if the Crapo amendment were signed into law. With that in mind, I voted present.

Mr. SMITH of New Hampshire. Mr. President, I rise today to wholeheartedly endorse this Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's, and Marines' Bill of

Rights. With this bill, the members of the Senate Armed Services Committee are making a pledge to the men and women who so bravely defend our freedoms: we honor them, we respect them, they and their families are important to us, and we are going to take care of them. We have been asking them to get by for too long, with too little. Starting now, we are going to make good on our debt of gratitude.

In my view, this bill addresses three key areas that must be fixed if we are going to be able to keep quality people in uniform. The largest pay raise since 1982, and annual raises that outpace inflation, will shrink a double-digit pay gap that has been growing for 20 years. Service men and women know they will never make as much as their civilian counterparts, and they serve proudly anyway. But we cannot tell them their contributions to America are invaluable, and then stand by and watch their earning power erode more and more each year without any plan for stopping the erosion. They deserve to provide their families with an honorable standard of living, and we are committed to doing that.

In addition, Mr. President, raises for mid-level officers and enlisted personnel are designed to retain critical personnel and reward performance over longevity. Currently, some leaders are paid less than their subordinates due to an over-emphasis on years served rather than results achieved. We win or lose wars based on results, not seniority, and the pay chart ought to reflect that reality. We want to encourage and reward those who go "above and beyond," and reinforce a culture dedicated to achievement and success.

Restoring previously reduced retirement benefits to their original levels shows a commitment to our veterans' long term security and the value of a career of honorable service. Our troops spend an entire career living in danger, sacrificing their own interests and putting their country's needs ahead of their family's. We cannot in good conscience reward their service by cutting their retirement benefits.

In closing, Mr. President, more than just voicing a commitment to our service men and women, we must take bold, swift action to put that commitment to work. We must provide them a long overdue increase in pay, we must reform the pay table to reward performance over longevity, and we must repeal the Redux retirement plan.

Mr. LEVIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that William Adkins, a National Security fellow on the staff of Senator ABRAHAM, be granted floor privileges during consideration of S. 4.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, if it is OK with the floor managers, that immediately following disposition of an amendment which I understand is going to be offered by Senator CLELAND, that the Chair then recognize the Senator from Kansas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, thank you very much.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my legislative fellow, Deborah Buonassisi, be granted floor privileges to assist me during the debate of S. 4.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 4

(Purpose: To extend authorities relating to payment of certain bonuses and special pays)

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I offer an amendment to S. 4. I think the clerk has the amendment. It is a 3-year extension of special pay bonuses.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Georgia (Mr. CLELAND) proposes an amendment numbered 4.

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end of title I, add the following new sections:

SEC. 104. THREE-YEAR EXTENSION OF AUTHORITIES RELATING TO PAYMENT OF CERTAIN BONUSES AND SPECIAL PAYS.

(a) AVIATION OFFICER RETENTION BONUS.—Section 301b(a) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999," and inserting "December 31, 2002."

(b) REENLISTMENT BONUS FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS.—Section 308(g) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(c) ENLISTMENT BONUSES FOR MEMBERS WITH CRITICAL SKILLS.—Sections 308a(c) and

308f(c) of title 37, United States Code, are each amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(d) SPECIAL PAY FOR NUCLEAR-QUALIFIED OFFICERS EXTENDING PERIOD OF ACTIVE SERVICE.—Section 312(e) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(e) NUCLEAR CAREER ACCESSION BONUS.—Section 312b(c) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(f) NUCLEAR CAREER ANNUAL INCENTIVE BONUS.—Section 312c(d) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "any fiscal year beginning before October 1, 1998, and the 15-month period beginning on that date and ending on December 31, 1999" and inserting "the 15-month period beginning on October 1, 1998, and ending on December 31, 1999, and any year beginning after December 31, 1999, and ending before January 1, 2003".

SEC. 105. THREE-YEAR EXTENSION OF CERTAIN BONUSES AND SPECIAL PAY AUTHORITIES FOR RESERVE FORCES.

(a) SPECIAL PAY FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN CRITICALLY SHORT WARTIME SPECIALTIES.—Section 302g(f) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(b) SELECTED RESERVE REENLISTMENT BONUS.—Section 308b(f) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(c) SELECTED RESERVE ENLISTMENT BONUS.—Section 308c(e) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(d) SPECIAL PAY FOR ENLISTED MEMBERS ASSIGNED TO CERTAIN HIGH PRIORITY UNITS.—Section 308d(c) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(e) SELECTED RESERVE AFFILIATION BONUS.—Section 308e(e) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(f) READY RESERVE ENLISTMENT AND REENLISTMENT BONUS.—Section 308h(g) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(g) PRIOR SERVICE ENLISTMENT BONUS.—Section 308i(f) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(h) REPAYMENT OF EDUCATION LOANS FOR CERTAIN HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WHO SERVE IN THE SELECTED RESERVE.—Section 16302(d) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by striking "January 1, 2000" and inserting in lieu thereof "January 1, 2003".

SEC. 106. THREE-YEAR EXTENSION OF CERTAIN BONUSES AND SPECIAL PAY AUTHORITIES FOR NURSE OFFICER CANDIDATES, REGISTERED NURSES, AND NURSE ANESTHETISTS.

(a) NURSE OFFICER CANDIDATE ACCESSION PROGRAM.—Section 2130a(a)(1) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(b) ACCESSION BONUS FOR REGISTERED NURSES.—Section 302d(a)(1) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting "December 31, 2002".

(c) INCENTIVE SPECIAL PAY FOR NURSE ANESTHETISTS.—Section 302e(a)(1) of title 37, United States Code, is amended by striking "December 31, 1999" and inserting in lieu thereof "December 31, 2002".

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I am pleased to bring before the Senate my amendment to S. 4, the Soldiers', Sailors', Airmen's and Marines' Bill of Rights Act of 1999, which would extend key bonuses and special payments to the men and women of our armed forces for another three years.

Mr. President, the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Service Secretaries have all testified and stated for the record that recruiting and retention are the most important challenges facing our military today.

With a strong economy and the perception of a reduced military threat abroad, the incentives to leave the military, or to not enlist in the military, are greater than ever before. However, even with the end of the cold war, we have increased our military commitments around the world, in such places as Bosnia, Iraq, and Somalia. We are now facing a possible use of American forces in Kosovo. Those brave individuals, who are preparing to respond to our Nation's call deserve our every consideration and effort on their behalf. That is the whole reason of S. 4.

The amendment I am now offering seeks to correct an oversight in the pending bill: namely, an extension of the authority for the services to provide special pay incentives for positions which have been hard to fill.

The authority for many of these special pays and bonuses will expire in December 1999. My amendment would simply extend funding authority through the end of 2002. It would give the Services the certainty that these essential retention tools will continue to be available.

These incentives affect many positions within our military, ranging from bonuses for aviation officers to special pay for health professionals. Passage of this amendment will reinforce S. 4's message that we as a nation take seriously our commitment to give our military the ability to continue to recruit and retain the finest servicemen and women in the world. I urge my colleagues to further that objective by adopting this amendment.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

Mr. ALLARD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, it is my understanding that this is included in the budget. So we don't have an objection on this side. We view it as an important retention use to help keep our enlisted men and women in the armed services.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, let me commend our friend from Georgia for

this amendment. He has made a number of major contributions already to this bill, most particularly in the transferability provision of the education benefits under the GI bill. That is a huge gain for our men and women in the military and for this Nation.

Again, as I pointed out earlier, I thank him for the initiative that he took to have that provision added in committee.

The amendment he is offering this afternoon is an important amendment. It will extend the authority for 3 years to pay bonuses and special pay which are so critical to both recruiting and retention of our military members, and we strongly support this amendment.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, before we vote, I want to recognize that Senator CLELAND is my ranking member on the Personnel Subcommittee. He is working hard. And I am looking forward to continuing to work on these issues that will come up during this year. I think our subcommittee is going to have some of the toughest challenges of any subcommittee on Armed Services. It is good to have somebody such as Senator CLELAND out there to help, and have somebody who served in the military and who walked in the shoes of the people whom we are passing legislation to have an impact on.

With that, I yield the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate? If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment of the Senator from Georgia.

The amendment (No. 4) was agreed to.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. LEVIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

KOSOVO

Mr. ROBERTS. I thank the Presiding Officer. I thank the distinguished Senator from Michigan and my distinguished friend and colleague from Colorado for their time.

This is sort of a news update on Kosovo, if I could describe it that way, because several Senators have indicated a strong desire to offer amendments to this bill in regard to the United States' role in Kosovo. I hope that we won't do that. We need this bill to be expedited to send a strong message to our American men and women in uniform. This is not to say, however, that we do not need a frank discussion of ongoing discussions about the United States' role in regard to Kosovo.

I have, as of 3 o'clock this afternoon—we are about an hour after

that—the latest report from the peace talks in Rambouillet, France. Secretary of State Albright has just indicated that:

After 17 days of laborious negotiations, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said today that ethnic Albanians have agreed to sign a Kosovo peace agreement within two weeks but the Serbs continue to balk at a deal.

I will go on with this very briefly.

According to senior U.S. officials, the Serbs still refuse to permit ethnic Albanians to have a president and are unwilling to cooperate with a war crimes tribunal looking into atrocities against civilians.

* * * * *

At a news conference by the six-nation Contact Group overseeing the talks, French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine announced that a new conference on the Kosovo conflict would be held in France beginning March 15.

So we have a lull. So the peace talks can continue. A cynic might say we drew a line in the sand. And yet, at another time we have gone beyond that line in the sand and our credibility is at stake.

Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, called for the parties to "use these three weeks, use them to build peace. . . . We have done a lot here, even if we have not done enough."

The agreement came 1½ hours after the deadline for the peace conference had passed. However, in regard to the Serbs, the news is not that good, to say the least. Their Deputy Prime Minister has described the talks as a bust, blaming the United States officials, who he said "want the blood of the Serbs."

He said, "I am afraid the Rambouillet conference failed and we must say very clearly who is guilty for that. But peace appeared as elusive"—right during these talks, Mr. President. "New fighting"—or continued fighting. Actually, it is old and continued and new fighting—"broke out between the Yugoslav army troops and the Serb police and the ethnic Albanian rebels."

So we still have war.

The reason I brought all of that up is that there was an article in Monday's Washington Post written by Dr. Henry Kissinger. I think Dr. Kissinger has pretty well summed up some of the concerns, at least, and the frustrations that many Senators have in regard to the lack of clarity in regard to the situation in Kosovo. And, of course, it affects everything we do in the Balkans, not to mention Bosnia.

Dr. Kissinger said this:

In Bosnia, the exit strategy can be described. The existing dividing lines can be made permanent. Failure to do so will require their having to be manned indefinitely unless we change our objective to self-determination and permit each ethnic group to decide its own fate.

But in Kosovo, Dr. Kissinger certainly pointed out that option doesn't exist. There are no ethnic dividing lines and both sides actually claim the